



Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Twentieth Congress
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 11089



Introduced by Representatives Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez, Yedda Marie K. Romualdez, Andrew Julian K. Romualdez, and Jude A. Acidre

AN ACT
INSTITUTIONALIZING A COMPREHENSIVE MENTAL HEALTH
AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR FILIPINO ATHLETES
AND PARA-ATHLETES, PROMOTING SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE
SPORTS ENVIRONMENTS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The State recognizes the importance of promoting the mental health and well-being of Filipino athletes and para-athletes as an integral component of sports development. Athletes at all levels, from grassroots and school-based participants to elite national representatives, face unique psychological pressures arising from training demands, performance expectations, injuries, and even career uncertainties. These challenges, if left unaddressed, may adversely affect not only the athletic performance but also the long-term personal development of the athletes.

Pursuant to Section 19, Article XIV of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, the State shall promote physical education and encourage sports programs, league competitions, and amateur sports, including training for international competitions. Complementarily, Section 15, Article II provides that the State shall protect and promote the right to health of the people, including mental health, while Section 13, Article II recognizes the vital role of the youth in nation-building.

While existing laws such as Republic Act No. 11036, otherwise known as the “*Mental Health Act*,” establish a general framework for mental health services, and Republic Act No. 12080, otherwise known as the “*Basic Education Mental Health and Well-Being Promotion Act*,” institutionalizes mental health programs in basic education, there remains a gap in the delivery of specialized and accessible mental health services tailored to the unique needs of athletes. Moreover, Republic Act No. 10699, otherwise known as the “*National Athletes and Coaches Benefits and Incentives Act*,” provides health-related benefits for national athletes but does not sufficiently address the systematic provision of mental health and psychosocial support within sports systems.

At present, mental health services in sports remain fragmented, unevenly accessible, and often reactive rather than preventive. Grassroots and school-based athletes, in particular, have limited access to structured mental health support, despite being at a critical stage of development.

This proposed measure seeks to address these gaps by institutionalizing a comprehensive mental health and psychosocial support system for athletes and para-athletes across all levels of participation. It provides for increased access to mental health services, integration of mental health mechanisms in sports programs, capacity-building for stakeholders, and strengthened inter-agency coordination, while ensuring confidentiality and data privacy.

By prioritizing mental health as a core component of athlete development, the State affirms its commitment to fostering resilience, sustaining performance, and promoting the overall well-being of Filipino athletes and para-athletes.

In view of the foregoing, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



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JUDE A. ACIDRE



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Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

Section 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “*Athlete Mental Health and Welfare Act.*”

Section 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to:

- a. Promote the holistic well-being of Filipino athletes and para-athletes, recognizing mental health as integral to sports performance, athlete development, and long-term welfare;
- b. Recognize sports participation and athlete welfare as important components of youth development, nation-building, and social development;
- c. Ensure accessible, timely, appropriate, and athlete-centered mental health and psychosocial support across all levels of sports participation;

- d. Protect athletes and para-athletes from mental health risks arising from injury, overtraining, burnout, abuse, performance pressure, public scrutiny, and career transitions;
- e. Foster safe, respectful, inclusive, and supportive sporting environments that uphold the dignity, welfare, resilience, and holistic development of athletes and para-athletes; and,
- f. Strengthen institutional support systems within schools, communities, local government units, and national sports programs.

Section 3. *Definition of Terms.* – For purposes of this Act, the following terms are hereby defined:

- a. *Athletes* refer to individuals engaged in organized sports at the grassroots, school-based, amateur, or professional level, including those representing the Philippines in international competitions. Professional athletes may be covered by this Act insofar as applicable and consistent with existing league rules, contracts, and other relevant laws;
- b. *Para-athletes* refer to persons with disabilities, as defined under Republic Act No. 7277, otherwise known as the "*Magna Carta for Disabled Persons*," as amended, who are Filipino citizens, engaged in organized sports at the grassroots, school-based, amateur, or professional level, including those representing the Philippines in international competitions;
- c. *Burnout* refers to physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged stress, excessive training demands, or sustained performance pressure;
- d. *Career Transition Support* refers to interventions and support mechanisms assisting athletes and para-athletes in adjusting to post-competition, post-injury, retirement, academic, occupational, or other major life transitions;
- e. *Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services (MHPSS)* refer to services and interventions that protect or promote mental well-being, including mental health promotion, counseling, psychological services, psychosocial support, crisis intervention, referral systems, stress management, and post-competition or post-injury support;
- f. *Sports Organizations* refer to schools, athletic associations, local government units (LGUs), National Sports Associations (NSAs),

national training bodies, sports clubs, and other entities involved in athlete training, competition, and development;

- g. *Trauma-informed care* refers to an approach that recognizes the impact of trauma, integrates such understanding into policies and practices, and promotes safe, supportive, and recovery-oriented sporting environments.

Section 4. *Establishment of the Athlete Mental Health System.* – A comprehensive mental health and psychosocial support system for athletes and para-athletes is hereby established, covering all levels of sports participation, including grassroots, school-based, and national training programs.

The system shall adopt a preventive, developmental, trauma-informed, and athlete-centered approach that promotes mental wellness, psychological resilience, safe sporting environments, and holistic athlete development.

It shall include programs, services, and interventions addressing mental health concerns commonly experienced by athletes and para-athletes arising from injury, overtraining, burnout, abuse, performance pressure, public scrutiny, retirement, career transition, and other high-stress sporting environments.

Section 5. *Scope of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services (MHPSS).* – Athletes and para-athletes shall be provided access, whether directly or through referral systems, to appropriate mental health and psychosocial support services, including but not limited to:

- a) Mental health assessments and screening;
- b) Counseling and psychological services;
- c) Stress management and resilience-building programs;
- d) Crisis intervention and psychosocial support;
- e) Voluntary post-competition, post-injury, and career-transition support mechanisms;
- f) Mental health literacy and awareness activities;
- g) Peer support and referral mechanisms; and,
- h) Facilitation of access to specialized clinical interventions, when necessary and appropriate.

Services under this Act shall, where applicable, be coordinated with existing health benefits and support systems under Republic Act No. 10699, otherwise known as the “*National Athletes and Coaches Benefits and Incentives*”

Act,” Republic Act No. 11036, otherwise known as the “*Mental Health Act*”, and other relevant laws.

Section 6. *Integration in Sports Programs.* – All sports organizations, schools, athletic associations, national sports associations, training institutions, and relevant sports governing bodies, where practicable, shall integrate mental health and psychosocial support mechanisms into their training and athlete development programs.

Such mechanisms shall include:

- a) Mental wellness promotion activities;
- b) Mental health awareness and literacy programs;
- c) Referral pathways to qualified mental health professionals;
- d) Preventive measures against burnout, overtraining, abuse, bullying, harassment, and harmful training practices; and,
- e) Policies promoting safe, respectful, inclusive, and athlete-centered sporting environments.

Section 7. *Mental Health Education, Safe Sports Environment, and Protection Programs.* – Sports organizations shall establish and implement mental health education and safe sports environment programs for coaches, trainers, sports administrators, educators, medical personnel, athlete support personnel, and, where applicable, parents or guardians of minor athletes.

Such programs shall include:

- a) Mental health literacy and awareness;
- b) Trauma-informed coaching and athlete engagement practices;
- c) Psychological first response and safe communication practices;
- d) Recognition of signs of mental distress and other mental health concerns affecting athletes and para-athletes;
- e) Prevention of physical, emotional, verbal, psychological, sexual, and other forms of abuse, harassment, bullying, exploitation, hazing, and harmful training practices; and,
- f) Promotion of supportive, non-discriminatory, and athlete-centered sporting environments.

Sports organizations shall likewise establish accessible and confidential reporting and referral mechanisms for athletes and para-athletes experiencing mental health concerns, abuse, harassment, exploitation, retaliation, or other harmful conduct.

Sports organizations and relevant governing bodies are likewise encouraged, where practicable, to conduct periodic psychosocial environment assessments, athlete welfare surveys, or similar mechanisms to identify systemic concerns affecting athlete well-being, safety, team culture, and mental health, subject to applicable data privacy and confidentiality laws.

The Department of Health, in coordination with the Philippine Sports Commission and other relevant agencies, shall conduct information, education, and awareness campaigns to reduce stigma, promote mental health awareness, and encourage help-seeking behavior among athletes, coaches, sports personnel, and other stakeholders.

Section 8. *Capacity-Building and Human Resource Development.* – The State shall promote the continuing professional development and specialized training of mental health professionals, coaches, trainers, educators, sports medicine practitioners, and athlete support personnel in sports psychology, psychosocial support, trauma-informed care, and athlete mental wellness.

The Philippine Sports Commission may, in coordination with the Department of Health, academic institutions, sports organizations, and relevant stakeholders, establish partnerships and training programs to expand the pool of qualified personnel capable of providing athlete-centered mental health and psychosocial support services.

The PSC, in coordination with the DOH, shall regularize and fund capacity-building programs, seminars, and training modules on sports psychology, mental health first aid, and trauma-informed coaching for coaches, trainers, sports administrators, and physical education teachers.

- a) Provincial and Grassroots Specialization Pipeline. – To address the acute shortage of specialized mental health professionals outside Metro Manila, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), in collaboration with the PSC, the DOH, and State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), shall establish a scholarship and specialization support program.

Beneficiaries of this program shall be subject to a return-service agreement requiring them to serve as mental health professionals with training or specialization in sports psychology for local government units (LGUs), regional public schools, or grassroots sports hubs for a period equivalent to the duration of their scholarship.

- b) Tele-Behavioral Sports Network. – The PSC, in coordination with the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), shall develop and maintain a secure, nationwide Tele-Behavioral Sports Network, subject to applicable data privacy, cybersecurity, and telemedicine regulations. This platform shall provide school-based, grassroots, and provincial athletes in remote or underserved areas with direct, confidential, and remote access to qualified mental health professionals with training or specialization in sports psychology.
- c) Equity in Resource Deployment. – Priority in resource deployment under this Act shall be given to underserved and geographically isolated areas.

Section 9. *Inter-Agency Coordination.* – The Philippine Sports Commission shall serve as the lead coordinating agency for the implementation of this Act, in coordination with the Department of Health, Department of Education, Commission on Higher Education, Philippine Olympic Committee, Philippine Paralympic Committee, local government units, National Sports Associations, and other relevant stakeholders.

The Department of Health shall provide technical guidance on mental health standards, service delivery, and integration with existing national mental health programs.

The Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education shall promote the integration of mental health and psychosocial support mechanisms within school-based sports and student-athlete development programs.

Section 10. *Confidentiality and Data Privacy.* – All mental health records, assessments, consultations, and related information of athletes and para-athletes shall be treated with strict confidentiality. Mental health consultations conducted pursuant to this Act shall, whenever practicable, be conducted in safe and private environments.

The collection, processing, storage, and sharing of such data shall comply with Republic Act No. 10173, otherwise known as the “*Data Privacy Act of 2012*.”

No information shall be disclosed without the informed consent of the athlete or para-athlete, except in cases authorized by law or when necessary to prevent serious and imminent harm.

Section 11. *Non-Discrimination and Right to Safe Sporting Environments.* – No athlete or para-athlete shall be subjected to unjust discrimination solely on the basis of utilizing mental health and psychosocial support services or having a diagnosed mental health condition, without prejudice to legitimate competitive, medical, safety, or performance standards. Mental health records shall not be used to unjustly deny athletic opportunities.

- a) **Athlete Grievance Mechanism.** – The PSC, in consultation with relevant stakeholders and mental health professionals, shall establish an independent, secure, and confidential Athlete Grievance Desk within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act. Any athlete who alleges discrimination under this Section may file a complaint, which the PSC shall act upon and resolve within a reasonable period, pursuant to the implementing rules and regulations.
- b) **Administrative Penalties.** – Any National Sports Association (NSA), school, sports club, or governing sports body found to have violated the non-discrimination mandate or failed to provide a confidential reporting channel as required under this Act shall, after due notice and hearing, face the following administrative penalties:
 - i) **First Offense:** Written warning and a mandatory audit of internal selection and welfare policies;
 - ii) **Second Offense:** Suspension of financial assistance, training allowances, or regular subsidies provided by the PSC for a period of six (6) months; and,
 - iii) **Third and Subsequent Offenses:** Temporary suspension or permanent revocation of accreditation by the PSC, without prejudice to civil, criminal, or other administrative liabilities under existing laws: *Provided, however,* That penalties imposed by the PSC under this Section shall be subject to existing PSC accreditation powers under Republic Act No. 6847, otherwise known as the “*Philippine Sports Commission Act,*” and related issuances.

Section 12. *Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting.* – The Philippine Sports Commission, in coordination with implementing agencies, shall establish a monitoring and evaluation system to assess the implementation and effectiveness of programs under this Act.

The monitoring and evaluation framework shall include indicators relating to service accessibility, utilization rates, training activities conducted, referral mechanisms established, psychosocial environment assessments or athlete welfare feedback mechanisms conducted, and other relevant performance measures.

An annual report shall be submitted to Congress, through the House Committee on Youth and Sports Development and the Senate Committee on Sports, detailing program implementation, utilization of services, challenges encountered, and recommendations for improvement.

Section 13. *Complementarity with Existing Laws.* – This Act shall complement existing laws, including Republic Act No. 11036, Republic Act No. 12080, otherwise known as the “*Basic Education Mental Health and Well-Being Promotion Act*,” and Republic Act No. 10699, particularly in facilitating access to and utilization of available health services.

Section 14. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary for the immediate implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current year’s appropriations of the Philippine Sports Commission (PSC). Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for its continued implementation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA).

Provided, That to ensure the sustainability and continuity of the Athlete Mental Health and Psychosocial Support System, a portion of the National Sports Development Fund (NSDF), as managed by the PSC pursuant to Republic Act No. 6847, may be utilized and prioritized for the implementation of the programs, services, human resource development, and rural deployment mandated under this Act.

Section 15. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Philippine Sports Commission, in coordination with relevant agencies and stakeholders, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for its effective implementation.

Section 16. *Separability Clause.* – If any part or provision of this Act is held invalid or unconstitutional, the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

Section 17. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, executive orders, issuances, decrees, rules, and regulations inconsistent with or contrary to the provisions of this Act are deemed amended, modified, or repealed accordingly.

Section 18. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,